

THE  
COMMON SCHOOL JOURNAL.

VOL. III. BOSTON, FEBRUARY 15, 1841.

No. 4.

LAURA BRIDGMAN.

[Concluded from the last Number.]

I HAVE thus far confined myself to relating the various phenomena\* which this remarkable case presents. I have related the facts, and each one will make his own deductions. But as I am almost invariably questioned by intelligent visitors of the Institution, about my opinion of her moral nature, and by what theory I can account for such and such phenomena, and as many pious people have questioned me respecting her religious nature, I will here state my views.

There seem to have been in this child, no innate ideas, or innate moral principles; that is, in the sense in which Locke, Condillac, and others, consider those terms. But there are innate intellectual *dispositions*; and moreover, innate *moral dispositions*; not derived, as many metaphysicians suppose, from the exercise of intellectual faculties, but as independent in their existence, as the intellectual dispositions themselves.

I shall be easily understood when I speak of innate *dispositions*, in contradistinction from innate ideas, by those who are at all conversant with metaphysics; but as this case excites peculiar interest, even among children, I may be excused for explaining.

We have no innate ideas of color, of distance, &c.: were we blind, we never could conceive the idea of color, nor understand how light and shade could give knowledge of distance. But we might have the innate disposition, or internal adaptation, which enables us to perceive color, and to judge of distance; and were the organ of sight suddenly to be restored to healthy action, we should gradually understand the natural language, so to call it, of light; and soon be able to judge of distance, by reason of *our innate disposition, or capacity*.

So much for an intellectual perception. As an example of a moral perception, it may be supposed, for instance, that we have no innate idea of God, but that we have an innate disposition, or adaptation, not only to recognize, but to adore Him; and when the idea of a God is presented, we embrace it, because we have that internal adaptation which enables us to do so.

If the idea of a God were innate, it would be universal and identical, and not the consequential effect of the exercise of causality; it

\* I have purposely refrained from saying any thing, at this time, with regard to her ideas of death; also of some other subjects, which I reserve until more accurate observations can be made.

would be impossible to present Him under different aspects. He would not be regarded as Jupiter,—Jehovah,—Brahma ; we could not make different people clothe Him with different attributes, any more than we can make them consider two and two to make three, or five, or any thing but four.

But on the other hand, if we had no *innate disposition* to receive the idea of a God, then could we never have conceived one, any more than we can conceive of time without a beginning ; then would the most incontrovertible evidence to man of God's existence have been wanting—viz : the internal evidence of his own nature.

Now, it does appear to me very evident from the phenomena manifested in Laura's case, that she has innate moral dispositions and tendencies, which, though developed subsequently, (in the order of time,) to her intellectual faculties, are not dependent upon them, nor are they manifested with a force proportionate to that of her intellect.

According to Locke's theory, the moral qualities and faculties of this child should be limited in proportion to the limitation of her senses ; for he derives moral principles from intellectual dispositions, which alone he considers to be innate. He thinks moral principles must be *proved*, and can only be so by an exercised intellect.

Now, the *sensations* of Laura are very limited ; acute as is her touch, and constant as is her exercise of it, how vastly does she fall behind others of her age in the amount of sensations which she experiences ! how limited is the range of her thought ! how infantile is she in the exercise of her intellect ! But her moral qualities—her moral sense—are remarkably acute ; few children are so affectionate, or so scrupulously conscientious,—few are so sensible of their own rights, or regardful of the rights of others.

Can any one suppose, then, that without innate moral dispositions, such effects could have been produced solely by moral lessons ? for even if these could have been given to her, would they not have been seed sown upon barren ground ? Her moral sense, and her conscientiousness, seem not at all dependent upon any intellectual perception ; they are not perceived, indeed, nor understood,—they are *felt* ; and she may feel them even more strongly than most adults.

These observations will furnish an answer to another question, which is frequently put concerning Laura ; can she be taught the existence of God, her dependence upon, and her obligations to Him ?

The answer may be inferred from what has gone before,—that, if there exists in her mind, (and who can doubt that it does,) the innate capacity for the perception of this great truth, it can probably be developed, and become an object of intellectual perception, and firm belief.

I trust, too, that she can be made to conceive of future existence, and to lean upon the hope of it, as an anchor to her soul in those hours, when sickness and approaching death shall arouse to fearful activity the instinctive love of life, which is possessed by her in common with all.

But to effect this,—to furnish her with a guide through life, and a support in death,—much is to be done, and much is to be avoided !

None but those who have seen her engaged in the task, and have witnessed the difficulty of teaching her the meaning of such words as

*remember, hope, forget, expect*, will conceive the difficulties in her way; but they, too, have seen her unconquerable resolution, and her unquenchable thirst for knowledge; and they will not condemn as visionary such pleasing anticipations.

I hope that funds will be provided to enable me to procure some intellectual person, who will devote her whole time to Laura, and that I shall not be obliged to depend so much upon those who have other duties. Hitherto, the plan of her education has been most faithfully seconded by the Teachers of the Institution, to whom great credit is due; especially to Miss Drew, whose unwearied patience, and ever-watchful kindness, are the more meritorious, that their value can never be conceived by their unfortunate object.

By her teachers then, and by all concerned, the attempt to develop the whole nature of this interesting being will be continued with all the zeal which affection can inspire; it will be continued, too, with a full reliance upon the innate powers of the human soul; and with an humble confidence that it will have the blessing of Him who hears even the young ravens when they cry.

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#### SPELLING.

MR. EDITOR:—There is probably no other study in school so little interesting to the scholar, and in general so ill attended to by the teacher, as spelling. In many of our Common Schools, a class is called out, four or six times a week, and a word or two given out to each scholar, *in turn*, just at the close of the day's labor,—and given out, generally, in the order in which they stand in the column. By this method, a pupil spells, perhaps, ten or twenty words in a week, or one or two hundred words in a quarter; some of which words he never heard of before, and some, too, he will never hear of again, unless he happens, in after-life, to follow literary pursuits. He has no knowledge of their meaning; for, as they stand in our ordinary spelling books, he can find no clew, by the context, to their definition;—and thus, this word-drilling is carried on, for a few months in a few years of his lifetime, and the pupil is then sent into the world with but little more serviceable knowledge of spelling, than if he had spelled so many words from an Indian Bible.

Now, sir, I would like to describe to your readers the plan that I pursue daily in my own school, and from which I have perceived many beneficial results;—not that I think it will be new to all, but there are some peculiarities which I have never noticed in any other school, although I have visited scores of the best in our State. Perhaps this ought to lead me to think that there is something wrong in my plan, as otherwise it would have been practised by the more experienced teachers. Yet I have never been able to better it.

My scholars spell in the morning, at the commencement of school, instead of at the close, which is usually the time appropriated. My reasons are these:—First. By studying the lesson the day before, and being obliged to remember the orthography of the words, till the time for recitation, it becomes more firmly fixed in the pupils' minds.

Second. The lesson is given from some one of their reading books,

that they may have an idea of the meaning of the words to be spelled, without the trouble of searching the dictionary for it; and each pupil is required to know the meaning of every word that occurs; and, if he has no dictionary, he must inquire of his teacher. The scholars come out from their seats, and take their places alphabetically, bringing their slates with them. Each one proceeds now to write every word given out, in a fair hand upon his slate, to the number of thirty or more. When this is finished, a scholar at one extreme of the class, exchanges slates with him or her, at the other, and the remainder pass their slates along, each to his next neighbor, so that each pupil may mark the error of the scholar standing next to him. The first scholar then proceeds to spell the first word given out in the lesson, from the slate before him; if right, the class assent by holding up their hands; if not, the next takes it, and when pronounced right by the teacher, all who disagree mark the word, and we then proceed to the next, and so on, till every word has been spelled audibly. Then the slates are returned, and those who have all the words right, are dismissed to their seats. Those who remain are allowed a few minutes to re-write and correct their errors, and are then required to lay the slates away in their desks, and not look at them again till the school is about to be dismissed. They are then called on for the misspelled words, which must be given without looking at their slates; or as many *over three*, as they can remember,—for I always demand as many as three, without reference to the slate. By this means, if a scholar has spelled a word wrong in the morning, he is obliged to remember it all the forenoon, and to be able to give it when called for; and thus, those words become so deeply impressed on his memory, that he is not liable to forget them. This method I have practised for five reasons, viz:—

First. By writing on the slate, each scholar spells every word.

Second. Because many spell well from the book, but miserably when obliged to write, if they have practised spelling without writing the words.

Third. Because each scholar, in detecting the error of his neighbor, learns something himself about the word.

Fourth. Because the pupil has to remember his errors three or four hours, and thereby is less likely to fail on those words the next time.

Fifth. Because the scholars are generally interested in the exercise.

In this way I have been enabled to make some very good spellers.

There are some other little matters, such as telling whether the word is a primitive or derivative word, the accent and sound of vowels, &c., which I am in the habit of requiring, an attention to which will do no harm to the pupil.

E. M. G.

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SPENCERTOWN, *Columbia Co.*, N. Y., 1840.

MR. EDITOR:—Every one who has read, attentively, the articles which have appeared, from time to time, in the *Common School Journal*, for the last year, will not hesitate to acknowledge, that most of the faults which exist in our Common Schools have been pointed out, and many very important and useful hints upon the best method of teaching, been suggested. It would seem that the whole ground had



already been occupied ; yet, nevertheless, when we remember that the "training up of a child in the way he should go" is among the most important and difficult duties which fall to the lot of mortals to perform, no one should hesitate to do all in his power to push forward the great and noble work.

It is from such a consideration that I shall now attempt to give you a few thoughts upon one particular branch of a teacher's duty, which has not, perhaps, received that attention and examination which its importance merits. It is simply this,—the necessity of frequently explaining and enforcing upon pupils the object for which they attend school, and the consequences which must result from the performance or non-performance of this duty. It is a lamentable fact, that but very few parents or teachers say one word to those under their care, upon this immensely important point. Children are sent to school, year after year, without ever knowing or thinking of the reasons for it. Day after day is spent in the schoolroom, in the accustomed routine of duties ; yet the teacher opens not his mouth to his pupils, in regard to the object of either his or their labors. They return home, at night, and neither father nor mother thinks or cares to ask of them, or explain to them, the design of their attending school. Under such circumstances, can it be expected that the young will make that progress in learning, or feel that interest in their studies, which they should do? Why not pursue the same course in this, as in any thing else? What should we say of the farmer who should bid his son go and work in his field, and not tell him the *object* for which he was to labor? What should we think of that merchant who should direct his child to keep an accurate account of his business transactions, without informing him, at the same time, that a day of reckoning was at hand, when such accounts would be needed. As well might we expect that a child would be interested in throwing gravel at the sun, as that he would be engaged in any business whatever, without knowing what it is for.

Perhaps it may be said that the tasks, usually imposed by teachers upon scholars, are sufficient to insure their attention to their studies. But is this so? Are not many hours lost, both in school and out of it, because the scholar, instead of considering that he is laboring for his own good, has the mistaken notion that it is all for the teacher's advantage? Does not experience show that, in such cases, pupils imagine every escape from study, or from a lesson, to be clear gain for them? If they get a lesson, do they not generally place it on the credit side of their own, and on the debtor side of their teacher's account? The reason of this is obvious. The scholar, instead of thinking that the teacher and himself are both laboring for the same great object, entertains the preposterous idea that they are going in opposite directions, so that, instead of employing his mind in pursuing his studies, he wastes his precious moments in inventing excuses to screen their neglect.

The only remedy for such evils, is for the teacher to convince his scholars, that he and they are travelling the same road ; that their object is one and the same ; that it is for *their* good that he requires them to get this or that lesson ; that every hour and moment mis-spent by them, is their loss, and not his.

To do all this, he must explain to them the *object* for which they

attend school. This he must do, not once or twice, but let him keep it constantly before their minds. Let him devote some portion of each day, in lecturing his scholars upon this subject.

And here I would remark that one requisite in teachers ought to be, that they be able to talk to, and lecture their scholars upon, topics of this nature; and that, too, fluently. Go into the schools in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, and examine the teachers in respect to this accomplishment, and how many could be found who are capable of rising before their schools, and talking to them intelligibly, for five minutes! Not one in ten, I venture to assert, would be found capable of doing it. Let any one examine his own experience on this point, and he will find the statement to be no exaggeration. I remember distinctly my schoolboy days, and I can say that but *one* of the long list of teachers, who swayed the sceptre over my devoted head, ever opened his mouth, or lisped one syllable to me about the reason of my being at school.

But again. The good, resulting from such a course pursued by teachers, would be advantageous not only to the scholars, but to the teachers also.

The government of schools,—that most difficult, and, I may say, most arduous task,—could thus be exercised with far less trouble, than in any other way. Let the scholars be convinced, that it is for their advantage that good order should be maintained, during school hours,—that every thing which destroys the harmony and good feeling between scholars and teacher, works their injury,—and the rod and ferule would be banished from our schoolrooms; peace and love would take the place of confusion and hatred; and the schoolhouse, which is now looked back upon, in after years, as a prison, or house of correction, would be contemplated with joy and gladness.

[The value of the suggestions contained in the above article can hardly be over-estimated. Fortunately, we have in our possession, the very model of what such 'lectures,' or 'addresses,' or 'talks,' (which is the better word,) should be;—and which we now publish. Every day furnishes occasions to the teacher, not for teaching the rudiments of knowledge merely, but for inspiring generous and noble sentiments in his pupils, and an aversion, an abhorrence for all that is low, grovelling, or unworthy. Ed.]

#### AN ADDRESS MADE AT THE OPENING OF A NEW SCHOOL.

This building having just been completed, so far as is necessary for present accommodation, and given in charge to the school committee, we hasten, without loss of time, to put it in possession of this school, and its teachers. An event so important to the welfare and comfort of our school children, as the erection of so valuable a building, ought not to pass without some notice. The selectmen and school committee, with other citizens and friends, have therefore assembled, this morning, to join the scholars and teachers, in taking possession of the house for the first time, with something more than the usual formality, and, I may say, to dedicate it to its future interesting and important uses. I am

requested to make a few remarks to the school, on the occasion, in behalf of the town and its authorities.

The erection of such a house, so large, substantial, and costly, built, too, in hard times, and just after the large outlay incurred in the purchase of the Dudley School,—such a proceeding, under such circumstances, must strike every one, even the smallest child here, if he will consider, as a proof, how exceedingly important the people of this town regard the object to which it is to be devoted. With a single exception, perhaps, no instance occurs to me, in which the town have expended so much money for any one object, as they have for this,—to provide for the boys of this part of the town, a large and commodious place of education. They have taxed themselves many thousands of dollars for this purpose. To provide, in the best possible manner, for the instruction of the young, they feel to be their first duty, and pleasure,—the best possible thing they can do for their children, and for the community. They feel it to be a chief duty and pleasure, for which no reasonable expense or pains are to be spared. And feeling thus, and having acted so liberally upon this feeling, they now expect us to meet them in this feeling. They expect us, who are connected with this school,—the scholars, the teachers, and the committee, to feel as they do, and act upon the feeling in our turn, and to do our part, as they have done theirs. The town has furnished the means for a great object ;—it is only the means,—but it is all they can do. Whether the means are to be wasted, or well used, and the end gained, or lost, depends now on the boys and the teachers.

Let me briefly state what that end or object is, for which this building has been raised, and the teachers provided. For what have your parents and friends, the people of the town, done all this? They have done it with the hope of raising up a well-informed, well-educated, well-behaved, orderly and moral set of young men, in the town ;—to give you good information, good principles, good dispositions towards one another, and towards all people ; and good habits of study, conduct, and speech. They wish to fit you, their children, for the various occupations of life ; to fill, well and honorably, any stations in society ; to make you successful and happy in whatever you are to do hereafter ; to make you good sons and brothers, good neighbors, intelligent citizens, and good, honest, and capable men. They wish to save you from the ignorance, the idleness, the vices, the disgrace, and the misery, which are so apt to fall to the lot of those men, who, when boys, have had no opportunity of going to school, or who have wasted the opportunity. To save you from what is bad in the world, and to put you in the way of all that is desirable and good in the world,—this is the object ; and the providing of schools, and sending you to them, is a principal means towards effecting that object. Here are the means ; and now, it rests mainly with you to say, whether the object shall be accomplished or not. The town have done their part,—and now let me tell you how to do yours. Yours is to be good scholars ; and I will give you my idea of what a good scholar is, and how he conducts himself.

In the first place, he is *punctual*. He will never be absent from school, unless it be absolutely necessary. He will be here at the hour, nay, at the precise minute ; because he knows that it is very important to the order of the school, and still more important as a habit



for himself. The boy who is behindhand here, is almost sure to be behindhand in every thing, all his life. He who is slack, tardy, and irregular in attendance here, will not only be a poor scholar, but I should consider it a pretty certain sign that he will always be slack and irregular. I should have little hope of his ever being good for much in the world,—so much depends on early disposition and habit.

In the second place, the good scholar will be *diligent* in his studies. His lessons are his work, and like all other work, at any age, he must do it with all his heart and might, or he will do it poorly;—he is a lazy boy, and that makes a lazy man, and that makes a poor creature, whether boy or man. He will work hard at his lessons, and fill up all the school hours with them. Sometimes he may think them hard and dull, and he may not see what use they will ever be to him;—but no matter,—he expects to see when he is older, and he believes that they are the very best things for him to do, or else they would not be set for him by older and wiser persons. He knows that some how or other, if he is diligent, he will get the sort of knowledge which will make him a respectable man hereafter, in whatever trade or calling he may have a taste for. There is many a young man who is very desirous of going into a certain line of business; but he cannot; he is not fit for it; he could not carry it on well; people will not employ him in it; and a principal reason is, he would not study at school, and has not got the necessary education;—and he must suffer disappointment and mortification all his life, for the negligence and idleness of his boyhood. The good scholar foresees this, and is wise in time. Or, if he does not think any thing about the future, he will be diligent, because *it is his duty*. He has a conscience about it, and takes satisfaction in doing his duty and doing right. He knows that such a course must end well for him, and will be a great happiness to his teachers, parents, and all who care for him.

In the third place, the good scholar will be *obedient*. He will be careful to observe all the rules of the school, and orders of the teacher. He knows that the teacher of a large school has labor and perplexity enough, without obstinacy, disorder, and mischievous and unruly behavior in the scholars. He knows that his own place is to obey, to give no trouble, and by his good example and influence in the school, to be an assistance and a source of satisfaction and relief to the teacher. He is young, and the teacher is older, and he takes it for granted that the rules and orders are wise and necessary;—and that there are more fit opportunities for him, elsewhere, to show his courage and independence. And yet he will not be a turbulent and disorderly fellow, any where. A good-natured and prompt obedience, without sulkiness or deception, is a prime virtue in a schoolboy. It is a great happiness to the teacher, and an excellent sign in a school, when compulsion and punishment are not found necessary.

Then, again, there are some things which do not relate directly to the lessons or discipline of the school, but which will always mark the good member of it. Out of school hours, on holidays, every where and always, I should expect to see him so behave as to do credit to the school he belongs to, and the instruction that is given him. He will come to school, neat, and cleanly in his person and dress, as far as depends on himself. There is a bad sign in being dirty and slovenly. He will be



civil and respectful, in his manners and language, to those who are older than himself, and pleasant, accommodating, good-natured, just, and kind, among his companions ;—not quarrelsome, nor selfish. We do not hear from him a brawling, blackguard voice, in the streets and playgrounds, nor any indecent or profane language, which, above all things, is a shame to any boy or man, and a disgrace and a pest, in any school. When we see, as we sometimes do,—and very painful it is to see it,—an idle boy, swaggering along in the street, or hanging round public places, with a vile segar, perhaps, in his mouth, or roaming over fields and through by-roads, on Sundays,—disfiguring fences, breaking trees, and trespassing on orchards and gardens,—growing up in ignorance and conceit, dealing out scurrilous slang, and filthy jests, and horrible oaths, thinking his conduct all manly and to be admired, when, alas! it is only beastly and disgusting,—when we see such a boy, God forbid that he should prove to be a member of this school. If such, or any thing like it, be a sample of what is found in our schools, we might as well have thrown our bricks and mortar and money into the creek, as to have built this house with them. But it will not be so ;—it must not be so. Perhaps I owe you an apology for suggesting the possibility that any boy here can sink so low as that. Shame on you, if you suffer such disgrace to come upon a school for which we have done so much, and from which we hope and expect so much.

I have described to you the good scholar. Let that be your mark. I say to each one, Be you that boy I have described ; do *you* be punctual, diligent, obedient, civil, kind, true, decent, and orderly and amiable in your whole deportment. *Do your duty*, boys ; there is nothing like that for your honor and happiness. Do your duty to the town, your parents, teachers, and one another, and yourselves. Do your *duty* here,—that is the manliest thing,—and a blessing will follow you here, and wherever you go hereafter.

We now leave you in possession of this new and handsome building. Take good care of it,—keep it neat and clean. This room is your parlor ;—make it and keep it a gentleman's parlor. Do not disfigure the walls ; apply no knife to the benches ; do not bring in mud on your feet, but leave it at the door. Keep your books and apparatus in good order. Let all about the building be neat. Whenever the grounds are fenced, if trees and shrubs should be planted, take care of them ; protect them from injury ; show your taste in ornamenting the spot. Make all look pleasant here, inside and out. Make every thing look the better, and not the worse, for your being here. Do not make yourselves bad neighbors to the people who reside near here, but get a good name, as being a quiet and orderly community.

We hope you will so improve your time here, and so conduct yourselves, that hereafter, when you have grown up, and become successful, respectable, useful men, you will be able to look back to the old schoolhouse, and say—"That was a good place for me ;—there I laid the foundation ; there I enjoyed myself, for there I got good habits and good principles, and there I did my duty ;—bless the old brick walls ;—inside of them, I got what has made me what I am."

To the teachers let me say, These boys have had good instruction and discipline, heretofore, and we have full faith that they are to lose nothing by the change. We give them into your hands ; and a great

and weighty charge it is,—a very sacred trust. Yours is an office, which, when rightly appreciated, is second to none in labor, responsibility, respectability, and importance. We have full confidence that you will discharge the trust with zeal and ability, with conscientious fidelity, and gratifying success. We give you the key. Take care of this vineyard, till we come again, looking for fruit.

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#### MASSACHUSETTS COMMON SCHOOL SYSTEM.

[Extracts from the North American Review, January, 1841.]

##### CONSTRUCTION OF SCHOOLHOUSES.

In the structure of schoolhouses, too much attention cannot be given to ventilation,—a matter, in its principles simple enough, yet almost universally misunderstood, and practically neglected. The important points in the construction of a ventilator are, that it should, when it is possible, be a warm tube, and that it should open near the floor of the apartment to be ventilated. When always warm,—which it is when it runs up by the side of a smoke-flue in operation,—it constantly acts, from the mechanical tendency of a column of heated air to rise; whereas, if cold, it acts only when air is, by some other means, forced into the room to be ventilated, as is the case when the room is warmed by air introduced from abroad. In every other case, a cold ventilator is not to be relied on. The second essential point is, that its opening should be near the floor of the apartment; for it then carries off the stratum of air in contact with the floor, which is always the coldest, and usually the foulest, in the room. An attention to these principles would add much to the comfort and healthfulness, not only of school rooms, but of lecture rooms, churches, and halls of legislation, all of which are usually ill ventilated.

Most of the rooms used for schools were originally constructed with an open fireplace. This is one of the best ventilators that can be contrived. It occupies the best possible position for a ventilator. Opening on a level with the floor, it takes off more of the poisoned air, and much less heated air, than it would in any other situation, since the heated air naturally rises to the upper parts of the room, while the foul air first sinks, and then gradually diffuses itself equally through the whole air with which it is in communication. The fireplace, unfortunately, is commonly stopped up, and its place supplied by a close stove. If, however, the fireplace be so contrived as to open or shut at pleasure, and the stove-pipe, as is usually the case, be made to enter the flue somewhere above, the only condition necessary to bring this ventilator into action, is secured. The upper part of the flue will be warmed, and the air will draw, regularly and steadily, upwards, through the open fireplace below. The only thing else necessary to carry on the process of ventilation with security against smoke, and with economy of heat, is to have a stream of the external air brought into the room directly beneath, or, better still, directly through the stove.

The best possible material for a furnace or stove, especially if it must be within the room, is the soap-stone, of which we have such abundant quarries in various parts of New England.

When the place of schoolhouses can be chosen, they should be built on a gentle declivity, looking towards the south-west,—whence come the pleasantest winds of summer, and protected on the north and east by a hill covered with wood. Trees should be on either side, at some little distance, and an ample green space in front, for play, with here and there an oak, an elm, or a beech. If, at such a distance from the playground as not to be injured or interfered with, there could be also a shrubbery and a plot for flowers, it would be a delightful appendage. It is to be hoped that those who are selecting sites for schools will be influenced by such considerations; and let them remember, that they are acting for the happiness of future generations. If there is one site in a town better than any other for the school, it ought by all means to be secured by the public, or by private generosity; and what could be a more fitting field for the exercise of a munificent public spirit, than furnishing these pleasant places for the sports and lessons of the young?

#### MASSACHUSETTS SCHOOL RETURNS.

The Abstracts of the Massachusetts School Returns, chiefly made up, as the last two are, of selections from the reports of the school committees, are the natural effect, the worthy return, of the principles and views that have been presented by the Board of Education. The seed has been sown broad-cast through the land, and we are beginning to see its fruits.

It would, however, be great injustice to consider these reports as the echo of any men's opinions. They show the free, vigorous action of strong minds, under the influence of the highest motives, upon subjects of commanding interest. It has been the good fortune of the Board, called into being by the will of the Legislature, to concentrate the public attention more fully than had hitherto been done, upon the condition of the schools; and, in their own reports, or by their Secretary, to point out and give distinctness to those particulars in their condition, which are of *most immediate importance*. Fortunately for the State, there were men, ready and able to carry out the views of the Legislature. But most fortunate for all is it, and most auspicious to the cause of improvement, that in every part of the State, are found men capable, not only of appreciating, but of expanding and rendering more practical, every useful suggestion that has been presented to them. In the volumes of "School Returns," particularly that for 1839—40, we have the mature opinions of some hundreds of minds, of high intelligence, of enlarged views, apparently above all sinister influences, full of philanthropy and practical experience, earnestly engaged in devising means for the improvement of the Common Schools. Their opinions, and the facts on which they are grounded, are embodied in reports, which were read, (so the statute requires,) in open town meeting, and accepted as expressions of the opinions of the assembled citizens. They are thus the collected wisdom of the people of the State, on what relates to the most precious of its institutions, and, as such, of the highest authority, and deserving of the most respectful attention.

The language of the Reports, from which these volumes are made up, indicates throughout, in the strongest manner, the attachment with which the *system* is regarded; the sense entertained of its essential and fundamental value to free institutions, of its capacity for indefinite im-



provement, and of the unmeasured good it is susceptible of accomplishing. But the patriotic men who have drawn up these reports,—and no volume ever written, gives evidence of more true patriotism,—are willing to look upon the system as it is, to see its defects, and to consult together for the remedies

#### TEACHERS.

The great and pressing want,—that in comparison with which most of the others sink into insignificance,—is the want of well-qualified teachers. This indeed is now felt to be the great want of the civilized world. In only one country is it fully supplied; it is only since the beginning of the present century that it has been realized, and any systematic attempt made to supply it. In every State of the American Union, where any one has looked into the condition of the instruction of the great masses of the children, the universal cry is, as in almost all the countries of the Old World, "Better teachers!"

This want was never so deeply felt in Massachusetts as at this present moment. There is no subject brought so constantly and so prominently before the reader throughout these volumes. In many parts of the State, the standard, by the confession of the committees, is very low; and yet it is impossible to find teachers who can come up to it. There is a mournful uniformity in the tone of the complaints from all quarters upon this point. They come, in great numbers, from nearly every county in the State. We had marked some of these representations to lay before our readers. But they would be only so many repetitions of a perfectly uncontradicted fact. Not a committee thinks its teachers good enough; not one but is aware how much more might be done by perfectly competent teachers.

No more serious question in regard to the schools can be asked, than the question, How is this want to be supplied? It is not enough that better teachers are every where in demand. The better teachers are nowhere to be had. It has been supposed that they exist, but are occupied in other pursuits, and that higher wages would call them to the work. This is true in a few instances; but it cannot be in many. In most towns in the Commonwealth, the best qualified individuals do actually teach in the winter schools. Those, who have never taught, are usually conscious that they could not teach well without instruction themselves, and are doubtful whether they should succeed; and those, who have had some experience in teaching, have been such teachers as are at present employed, only with a standard less high, and with inferior qualifications. The character of each individual, as a teacher, and his modes of teaching, of arranging classes and studies, and of governing, depend in a great degree upon the character of the schools in which he was himself taught. Teaching is, in many particulars, an art, and, like all other arts, its processes are transmitted from hand to hand. How, then, are better teachers to be formed, to supply this great and increasing demand?

In the first place, it will undoubtedly be found, that, in consequence of the greater attention given to the schools, and especially in those districts in which the parents take a strong personal interest, and frequently visit the schools, the present teachers will be improved. Hitherto, skill in teaching has been almost exclusively a consequence of

personal experience. The teachers have begun entirely ignorant of their art. The good old custom of serving an apprenticeship in teaching has long since passed away, and nothing has yet come in to take its place. The good teachers have been made such at the expense of experiments upon their pupils. By this process every teacher is improved; and those, who enter upon the work with a hearty desire to excel in it, a genuine love of it, and a peculiar talent for it, will often arrive at excellence.

Then there have been some good books written on the subject of teaching, which will materially aid those who desire to improve themselves. Such are "The Teacher," by Jacob Abbott, "Lectures on School-Keeping," by S. R. Hall, and an excellent little book, "The Teacher Taught," by E. Davis. Many valuable suggestions may be gained from these, and there is evidence, in the volume before us, that they have already done good. The school committee of Middleborough notice "the schools which have been taught upon the Abbott system," in terms of high commendation, and recommend Mr. Abbott's work to the perusal of teachers. Much valuable instruction is given in the Numbers of the "Common School Journal," particularly in the extracts from "Palmer's Prize Essay"—an important addition to the school-master's library, lately issued from the press. The lectures delivered before the American Institute, now forming ten volumes, contain the suggestions of some of the best thinkers, on various matters interesting to the teacher, and often give the fruits of the observation and practical wisdom of veteran instructors. But these, however valuable as helps, cannot serve to form the character of the teacher, any more than a law library, without previous practice or apprenticeship, would form an accomplished lawyer.

Much may be expected from the teachers' meetings. In every instance in which the instructors of a town have associated together, and had regular meetings for discussion, and comparison of opinions and experience, a visible effect of the most beneficial kind has been produced on their schools. Wherever this can be done, therefore, it should be done; and the school committees, so far as lies in their power, should see to it, that neither the fact that the teachers have been strangers to each other, nor distance, nor the shortness of their engagement, should prevent them from meeting together.

By all these means, the teachers may be somewhat, and often very much, improved. But, after all, for the accomplishment of this great object, we must look to the Normal Schools, and other places for the preparation of teachers. And already the eyes of the friends of the schools are directed thitherward.

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#### QUESTIONS FOR SCHOOL TEACHERS.

[From the Maine Farmer.]

Some three thousand teachers are now doubtless employed in the Common Schools of Maine. A considerable number of these, perhaps, may see the Maine Farmer, and glance their eye over the Visiter department. Will they tolerate a few plain questions asked in a good-

natured mood, designed for the benefit of themselves and their scholars? We throw them out in a miscellaneous manner, and invite attention to them.

1. What motives ought to influence a person to engage in this work?

2. What are some of the motives which frequently seem to predominate?

3. Is it important that a teacher have fondness for children, and for the business of training them?

4. What native traits of character are important as prerequisite to teaching?

5. How many and what branches of knowledge ought the teacher to be qualified to teach?

6. Is it necessary to be acquainted with any branches he is not expected to teach;—if so, what branches?

7. Ought he to teach any branches in which there are no class-books studied?

8. Is it of any importance to be acquainted with all the scholars, as soon as practicable?

9. Is any advantage gained by an early acquaintance with parents?

10. How is this acquaintance best gained?

11. Do you seek *familiar* acquaintance with the scholars out of school, or would you keep them at "*a respectful distance*," and thus maintain a "*proper dignity*?"

12. Would you gain the affections of scholars, and thus lead them on in the paths of virtue and knowledge; or can you drive, or scold, or whip them on just as well.

13. Would you have a code of laws and penalties written out and posted up, after being read in the hearing of the school, or would you bring in a heavy rule, or a long birch, and brandish them well, and leave the scholars to guess at the rest; or have you a more excellent way?

14. Do you threaten scholars manfully, and treat them as a set of rogues, or do you approve of kindness and moderation?

15. Is it right, in any case, to frighten scholars with the implied threat of any punishment you mean never to inflict?

16. Is it right, under any circumstances, to *deceive* a scholar as a means of governing him?

17. Is it well to allow whispering at all in school; and if so, should it be unrestricted, or should it be confined to a certain hour of the day; or should the scholar always ask leave to speak with another?

18. Is it well to encourage the practice of "going up," as it is called, in the classes?

19. Is it well to give rewards to those who thus excel?

20. Should the principle of *emulation*, in its common acceptation, be resorted to, in any form?

21. In arranging classes, is it better to have many, or as few as practicable?

22. Is spelling as much attended to, and as well as it ought to be, in schools generally?

23. What are the best methods of securing good spelling?

24. What methods would you employ in securing good reading?



25. What are the advantages and disadvantages of simultaneous reading; and to what extent and under what regulations should it be practised?

26. How early should scholars commence writing?

27. What is the proper position of the body? the book? the pen? the hand holding it? the left hand?

28. How often should scholars be encouraged to write, and how long at one time?

29. Is it the better way to "set copies," or to give them slips? or to write copies on the black-board for the whole? Would any advantage be gained by using all these modes?

30. Is it well to encourage the writing of small hand first, or should there be extensive practice in coarse hand?

31. What are the benefits and disadvantages of each?

32. Is it well to encourage the small children in the use of the slate and pencil, before they may with propriety use the pen?

33. Is it desirable to encourage the practice of drawing, in our Common Schools, among the incipient efforts of children with slate and pencil?

34. How many regular branches of study is it proper for one scholar to pursue at the same time?

35. Can a scholar effect as much, if he employs his mind all day upon one branch, as by having some variety?

36. Is it desirable daily or frequently to interrupt the regular routine of study by a general exercise, to which all shall attend?

37. Is it well to practise simultaneous answering of questions in such general exercises?

38. What are some of the benefits of this practice?

39. Is it desirable and practicable to introduce vocal music into school?

40. How much time may profitably be devoted to this branch?

41. What benefits may result from the introduction of this, aside from the intrinsic value of music?

42. Is it well to encourage the study of natural history, in any of its departments, in the Common Schools?

43. What motives urge the study of geology and mineralogy?

44. Can they be at all introduced without damage to the common studies?

45. Should botany be studied in our summer schools so far as to encourage the collection and preservation of plants?

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*Sunday Schools and Common Schools are the great levelling institutions of this age. What is the secret of aristocracy? It is, that knowledge is power. Knowledge, the world over, has been possessed by the few, and ignorance has been the lot of the many. The merchant,—what is it that gives him wealth? The lawyer,—what is it that confers upon him political power? The clergy,—what is it that gives them influences, so benign for good purposes, so fatal for mischievous ends? Knowledge. Knowledge can never be taken from those by whom it has once been obtained, and hence the power which it confers upon the few cannot be broken, while the many are uneducated. Strip its possessors of all*

their wealth, and power, and honors, and knowledge still remain the same mighty agent to restore again the inequality you have removed. But there is a more effectual way to banish aristocracy from among us. It is by extending the advantages of knowledge to the many,—to all the citizens of the state. *Just so far and so fast as education is extended, true democracy is ascendent.*

[We take great pleasure in commending to the favor of the public the AMERICAN JOURNAL OF SCIENCE AND ARTS. By the subjoined advertisement it will appear that it is now offered to subscribers on more favorable terms than heretofore. It is a work which is conducted by, and receives contributions from, the most scientific men in this country, and it is richly deserving of public patronage. Ed.]

### THE AMERICAN JOURNAL OF SCIENCE AND ARTS;

CONDUCTED BY PROF. B. SILLIMAN, AND E. SILLIMAN, JR., OF YALE COLLEGE.

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*New Haven, Conn., Jan. 1841.*

[THE COMMON SCHOOL JOURNAL; published semi-monthly, by Marsh, Capen, Lyon, and Webb, No. 109 Washington Street, Boston. HORACE MANN, Editor. Price, One Dollar a year.]